Central American NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.

Editor: Bernard Davies, 16, Lynwood Close, Gordon Road, South Woodford, London E18 1DP 01-504-5042

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EDITORIAL

We had better begin this Spring issue with a profuse apology to John Fosbery and to our readers for two mistakes which appeared in his page 8 article on Nicaraguan forwarding agents in the December issue:

> In the penultimate paragraph of the article the name A L Belchier should read BESCHOR.
> At the end of the article the name W P MALI should read W P MALL.

Thanks to the contributor writing as "Quetzal" for responding to the Editorial plea for articles on Guatemala, and thanks to those who have kept the pot boiling for the Causerie. The Editor is personally very grateful to Richard Washburn for his interesting and informative comments on the Baracna issue of Honduras as included in this issue. We hope that other members will send us comments, questions and articles; there is some danger that Nicaragua articles may "swamp" the rest, but if we receive much Nicaragua and little Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica and Guatemala, what else can we do? John Fosbery's excellent "Mainsheet" was filled with quite outstanding material from its inception by the commissioning of articles from experts known to John, and from the wealth of knowledge which John himself could supply. However, a Newsletter is a very different matter; "Mainsheet" continues under Brian Moorhouse, and we have no wish to rival it, nor has your Editor the talent to rival it if he would. As we see it, the function of this Newsletter is to allow members to air their problems and to help in solving those of other members. We also serve as a trial ground for tentative articles in finished or in incomplete form. So please do not hold back for fear that your contributions will expose ignorance or error. As John says, Latin American collectors tend to be lonely people, yearning for exchange of information or chat with those few kindred spirits world-wide who share their "specialisation". In many general societies we appear to be regarded as harmless eccentrics to have chosen Latin America as our field of collecting; old myths (such as those concerning the alleged harmfulness of the Seebeck contracts) still put us beyond the pale for those with long memories and little critical discrimination. Therefore, let us stick together. Let us use this Newsletter as a means of writing for fellow-members with similar interests; perhaps out of this a few real philatelic friendships may be born.

We would like to congratulate Brian Moorhouse, who was awarded a silver gilt medal and the P.T.S. trophy at Stampex. The trophy is awarded for an exhibit of Foreign material issued after and around 1900, and was given to Brian for his entry of "Honduras - the 1898 Locomotive issue".

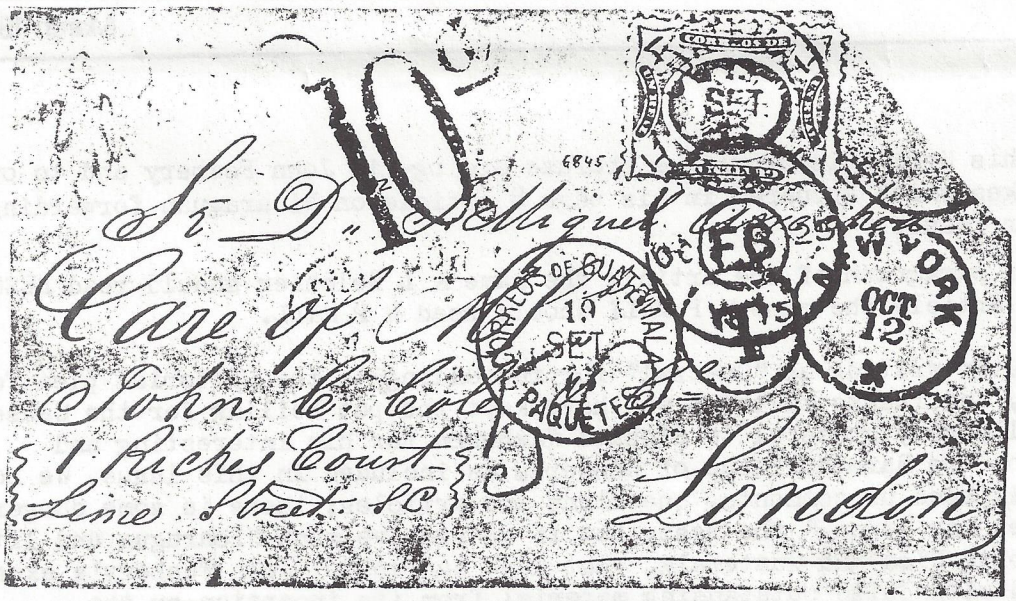
Finally, the Editor would be interested to hear definitions of "postal history" following a local competition in which the judges said they were doubtful whether one of his entries should count, since it consisted only of bisects. It in fact gave a potted history of the need for and uses of bisects in Nicaragua. He was told that "postal history" was to do with markings (of which, by the way, there were plenty in the exhibit). He felt that this interpretation was rather too narrow and wonders whether members would agree with him.

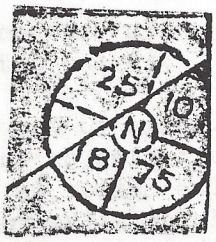
Bernard Davies

EARLIEST KNOWN DATES OF THE 1875 "LIBERTY HEAD" ISSUE OF GUATEMALA by "QUETZAL"

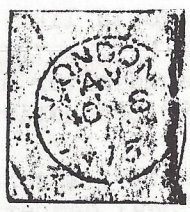
Some time ago 2 cover fronts with, fortunately, the part where the backstamp (arrival mark) to each was applied still attached, were put up for sale at a Continental auction. Both items were addressed to Sr Don Miguel Arrechea in London.

The first one bears a nice 1 Real light blue (one stamp missing) with s.c. "Correos de Guatemala, Paquetes" in green of 19 SET 75, New York transit and tax strikes, UK 10d tax mark and arrival strike 25.10.1875.





The second has a beautiful 2 Reales chestnut with s.c. "Correos de Guatemala, Paquetes" in black of 4 OCT 75, New York transit and tax strikes, London arrival mark NO 6 1875. The Handbook GI, page 76 mentions 2 covers known to be dated 1875, the earliest having the date of 19 OCT 1875 (the photo on page 77, however, shows 15 OCT 75).



The first mentioned two items appear, therefore, to have the earliest known dates. If any readers know of earlier dates please let the editor know.

The East Coast of Nicaragua and its Postal Services

by Michael P Birks

The Office at Greytown

In 1852 Greytown came under the rule of the independent municipal council, headed by James Green, who, as British Consul, became responsible for the forwarding of the mails. This was done free of charge, as mentioned earlier, because of the lawlessness of the area.

Five years later the first datestamp was supplied from London (fig 8), a 25mm dated double arc stamp inscribed 'GREYTOWN', together with "... 6 lbs of stamping composition and a stamping pad". This datestamp was impressed upon all letters forwarded by Green, the earliest recorded being 19th February 1856.

In 1857 the concession of free postage was withdrawn, the rate being fixed from Greytown as 1/- (5p) per ½ ounce (14g) to the U.K., and 1/1½d (5½p) per ½ ounce to the rest of Europe. The withdrawal of this concession may have been precipitated by a service introduced by Costa Rica to Greytown, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, which had to be fully prepaid. The rates from Bluefields were considerably higher. A notice dated 17th May 1857 gives "The rates of British Postage chargeable on letters as follows:-

Not exceeding ½ oz. - 2/3 (11p); Above ½ oz. and not exceeding 1 oz. 4/6 (22½p); Above 1 oz. and not exceeding 2 oz. 9/- (45p). Newspapers 1d (0.4p). Postage must be prepaid in advance or they will not be forwarded."

The Bluefields rates were reduced to those of Greytown in a Treasury warrant dated 1859, and remained the same until the closure of the office.

On 15th October that year, a seal and a new datestamp was despatched from London, the datestamp consisting of a single arc inscribed 'GREYTOWN' (fig 9). The seal (fig 10), was a 27mm double circle with a crown in the centre, inscribed 'GREYTOWN', and was used to seal the mail bags before handing over to the ship's Captain. 'Handing over' is not quite how it happened. The harbour at Greytown was too shallow to allow ships to enter, assuming they could safely navigate the very dangerous offshore reefs. For this reason, the mails were landed on the uninhabited island of Cassave and deposited in a hut provided for the purpose. The bags were collected, and the Greytown mails left, when the ship arrived.

By error, in addition to the seal and the datestamp, a killer cancellation consisting of a 'C' in an oval of thirteen bars, was sent. This killer was destined for Constantinople, but the error was detected before it was put into use in Greytown.

fig 8

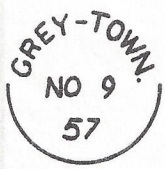


fig 9

fig 10

fig 11

On 14th April 1859 a distinctive 23-4mm crowned double circle, inscribed 'PAID AT GREYTOWN' was despatched (fig 11). This 'paid' mark was to be struck in red, as all 'paid' marks were supposed to be, but no examples have come to light. The previous datestamps were all struck in black.

The 205 year old British Protectorate came to an end in 1860, but not the British Post Office at Greytown. Adhesive postage stamps were issued by the Nicaraguan Post Office on December 2nd 1862, and were put on sale in Granada, Leon and Greytown, but they were not valid for postage outside Nicaragua, because the country was not a member of the U.P.U. at that time. Because these adhesives were not recognised abroad, mail travelling outside Nicaragua would be treated as unpaid, and so I presume that there must be somewhere, covers bearing postage due markings and Nicaraguan adhesives only. Of course, overseas mail could be prepaid at the British Post Office at Greytown still.

On 16th October 1863, a 37mm straight line 'REGISTERED' was despatched to Greytown. This was followed the next year by another 'paid' marking, 20mm in diameter, this time without the crown (fig 12), and a 20mm single circle datestamp (fig 13), which was later used to cancel adhesives. Again the 'paid' mark was struck in red, and the datestamp in black.

The problem of prepaying postage abroad was resolved in 1865, when British adhesives to the value of £25 were sent from London, on 15th August.

The first supply was made up as follows;-

480	@	1d	£2	SG43 1d 'stars' Pl 197
120	@	2d	£1	SG45 2d blue Pl 9
80	@	3d	£1	not known used from this despatch, earliest 1875 Pl 17
180	@	4d	£3	SG95 4d 'garter' Pl 8
120	@	6d	£3	not known used from this despatch, earliest 1874 Pl 14
80	@	9d	£3	this value not known used from Greytown
240	@	1/-	£12	SG101 1/- 'garter' Pl 4
			£25	

The means to cancel these stamps was effected by the supply of a horizontal C57 'killer' cancel, measuring 28mm x 22mm (fig 14) despatched with the adhesives. The datestamp fig 13, was also applied to the covers, and sometimes the adhesives. Also sent was an unframed two lined marking inscribed 'INSUFFICIENTLY PREPAID', measuring 18mm a 17mm (fig 15).

fig 12

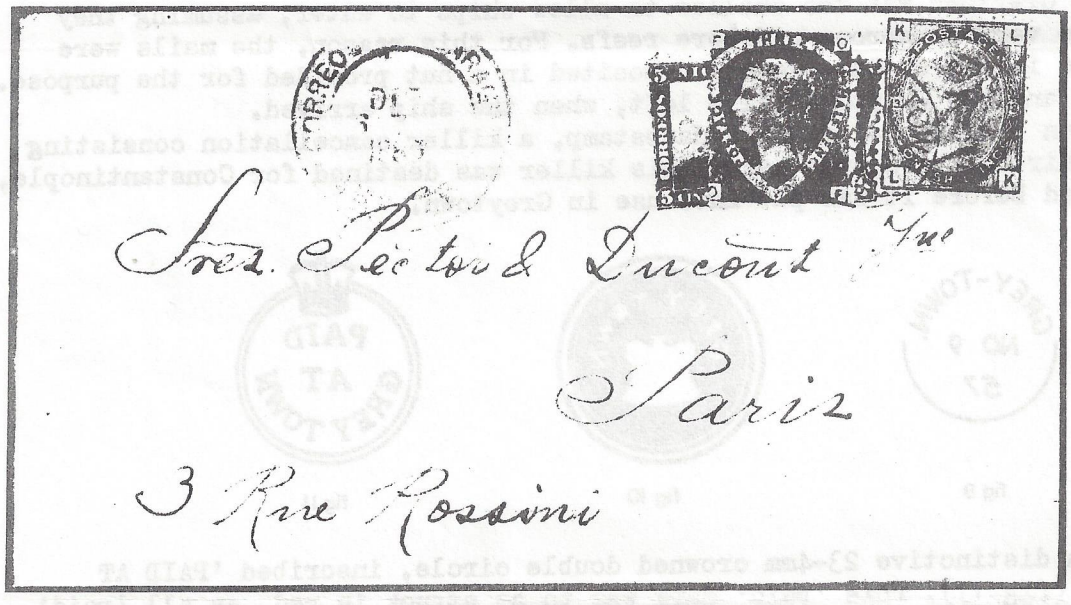
fig 13

fig 14

fig 15

fig 16

Further supplies of adhesives were received during the 17 years the office was in operation, and a complete list of stamps known used can be found in Gibbons Part 1.



These adhesives were stuck alongside or sometimes on top of the Nicaraguan adhesives, which prepaid postage to Greytown. These (now rare) combination covers as they have become known, like the one illustrated on the left, were then despatched to their respective destinations and treated as fully prepaid. One such cover sold by Stanley Gibbons in New York (1981), fetched about £8,500, and was used to illustrate the miniature sheet issued in 1976.

During 1875, a duplex canceller was supplied, consisting of an upright 'killer', with a dated circle (fig 16). Four years later another dated circle was despatched from London, and may have been sent to replace the dated half of the duplex.

The final marking was despatched on 8th May 1880, and consisted of a 70mm straight line 'MISSENT-TO-GREYTOWN-NICA', but I have not seen this mark or an illustration of it, and so cannot reproduce it here.

On May 1st 1882, the office finally closed, and Nicaragua took over responsibility for her own mails.

Bibliography

In addition to those works already mentioned, the following have been consulted.

Royal Mail 1839-1939 - T A Bushell

Britain's Stampless Protectorate - P Hamilton, Stamp Collecting 25/5/1955

The Postmarks of Nicaragua - D N Kilner, Mainsheet

NICARAGUAN TOWNS : Part II

(Taken from "Etude Economique Sur La Republique de Nicaragua" by Désiré Pector, Nicaraguan Consul in Paris; published about 1892-3.)

In most cases town names are followed by department name and town's population.

P = Post Office T = Telegraph Office RR = Rail Road

Macuelizo - (Nueva Segovia, 586 in 1888)

P T Managua - (Managua, 27 000 in 1891)

T Masatepe - (Masaya, 5 054 in 1888)

P T Masaya or San Fernando de Masaya - (Masaya, 22 000)

P T Matagalpa - (Matagalpa, 15 000 in 1889)

Mateare or Mateares - (Managua, 400 in 1889)

T Metapa or San Pedro y Chocoyas - (Matagalpa, 4 000)

P T Momotombo, formerly Leon Viejo - (Leon, 300)

Moyogalpa - Port on the island of Ometepe, visited three times monthly by the steamer "Victoria". Population 1 000.

T MuyMuy or Muimuy - (Matagalpa)

T Nagarote - (Leon, 2 400)

T Nandaime - (Granada, 5 500)

Nandasmo - (Masaya, 1 052 in 1888)

T Nindiri - (Masaya, 1 032 in 1888)

P T Ocotal el, or Nueva Segovia - (Nueva Segovia, 10 000)

Palacaguina - (Nueva Segovia, 1 245 in 1888)

Perla laguna de - 30 miles north of Bluefilds. Pop. 700

T Playa Grande - (Chinandega) - Customs for merchandise from Salvador and Honduras.

Posoltega - (Chinandega) - 1 000, linked by RR to Chichigalpa and Quezalguaque.

Potosi - (Rivas, 3 500)

T Pueblo Nuevo or La Paz - Between Leon and Nagarote

Quezalguaque - (Leon, 830)

Rama, el - (Siquia, 600)

Realejo, villa del - (Chinandega, 1 000)

P T Rivas - (Rivas, 15 000)

T San Carlos, villa de - (Chontales, 600 in 1889)

T San Jorge - (Rivas, 3 000)

T San Juan de Limay or Limay - (Esteli, 1 263 in 1888)

P T San Juan del Norte, San Juan de Nicaragua or Greytown - (District of San Juan del Norte)

P T San Juan del Sur or Ciudad Pineda - (Rivas, 900)

T San Marcos - (Carazo)

T San Miguelito - (Chontales, 150 in 1889)

T San Pedro de Lovago or Lovago - Between Acoyapa and Juigalpa

San Pedro del Norte - see Dos Bocas

San Rafael - (Carazo, 3 900 in 1888)

T San Rafael del Norte - (Jinotega, 2 500)

San Rafael del Sur - (Managua, 3 900 in 1888)

Santa Catarina - Little island in the Caribbean, postal service between here and Ciudad Rama

T Santa Maria - (Nueva Segovia, 1 010 in 1888)

Santa Rosa - (Leon, 1 555)

T Santo Tomas - (Chontales, near La Libertad)

T San Ubaldo - (Chontales, 200)

T Sauce, el - (Leon, 4 000)

Sebaco - (Matagalpa, 2 000)

T Somotillo - (Chinandega)

T Somoto Grande - (Nueva Segovia, 4 330 in 1880)

Telica - (Leon, 2 600)

Telpaneca, San Juan del - (Nueva Segovia, 2 884)

P T Teustepe - (Chontales)

Tipitapa - (Chontales-Matagalpa, 4 000 in 1888)

Tola - (Rivas, 400)

Totogalpa - (Nueva Segovia, 2 241 in 1888)

Trinidad - (Esteli, 2 717 in 1888)

T Viejo, el - (Chinandega, 5 000)

Yalaguina - (Nueva Segovia, 905 in 1888)

Concluded

CAUSERIE

501 Nicaragua Cartero markings. Our thanks to Kilian Nathan who has sent us a great deal of material on this subject. With the help of Kilian's photostats, Mike Birks is writing an article on the subject. Finn Stjernholck has also responded helpfully.

502 The Nicaragua "Estado" label. Doug. Bayliss suggests that this may possibly be a political propaganda label issued in connection with an attempt to resuscitate the ill-fated Central American Federation of 1898-99. It may be remembered that both Nicaragua and El Salvador issued stamps inscribed "Estado de" in 1898 and 1899. Doug feels it is safe to say that the label had no franking value, and that the 5 (c?) represents a contribution to the cause. Doug. quotes from the 1955 and 1956 issues of "South American Handbook": "On January 19th., 1921, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica agreed at San Jose' on yet another Federation. It broke down almost immediately."

601 Nicaragua "Arms" issues of ABN Co. and Waterlow 1905-7-9. Doug. Bayliss comments: "1905 ABN a. Laurel wreath touches frame of centre oval at L. in several places; b. Rays behind volcanoes are fairly distinct. 1907 WAT. c. Only the ribbon ends of the laurel wreath touch the frame; d. Rays are very distinct; e. Volcanoes are less heavily shaded. 1909 ABN f. Laurel wreath as 1905; g. Rays are less distinct than in 1905 issue. I suggest that what John calls the 'softer' appearance of the Waterlow printing is due to d. and e. There are several possible reasons for the Waterlow contract, including those adduced by John, but why was it necessary to obtain a fresh supply of stamps? Although five values of the 1905 issue had received various surcharges (SG 219-238), plenty of mint seemed to be available, and even now they are fairly common, apart, perhaps, from the 50c. Does this mean that ABN were printing for the Trade in excess of contract quantities? It is noteworthy that ABN continued the 'long set' policy of the Hamilton Bank Note Co., whereas Waterlow had only a 'short list' of seven values."

Owing to a lack of space, the items intended for the Causerie of this issue, have been held over until the next issue, which will be published in June.

5 Estado de 5
América
Central
5 Nicaragua 5

HONDURAS: THE PAZ BARAONA 1c ISSUE OF 1925 by Richard Washburn

Following Bernard Davies' article, some additional information may be of interest to our Honduras collectors.

1. There are three types of these stamps.

   Type I The genuine.
   Type II The reprints, unauthorised, made about 1930 with the original plates, worn and damaged from improper storage.
   Type III The forgeries.

Type I Type II Type III

2. The originals can be plated using the thin guide lines or frame lines.

3. The decree authorising these stamps was published in La Gaceta No. 6648, for February 26, 1925

4. The unauthorised reprints made with the damaged plates have the following characteristics:-

   a. Looking at the stamp, the left side of Baraona's moustache droops down and joins his shirt collar.
   b. The sequence of dots on the forehead and clear cut lines between the portrait and oval border line are somewhat indistinct.
   c. The paper is different.
   d. The frame lines are either missing entirely or show in short pieces only.

5. The forgeries were made in Mexico for a well-known Honduras. They were made by taking a photograph of the original, reducing it to the size of the original, making up a plate of 25 subjects and printing. This work was done at Foto Lipkau, whose address at the time the fakes was made was Ven. Carranza No. 13, Mexico, D.F.. These forgeries were perforated 11.75. Besides being quite crude, the giveaway is a break in Baraona's left ear.

As far as scarcity goes, the catalogue pricing is O.K. as a guide for the carmine, blue and brown shades. The red and green colours deserve additional comments. Gibbons numbers 226 (red) perf. and imperf. are very rare, even more so than the 226a greens. I have only seen two "reds", one in the Philatelic Foundation reference collection in New York and one in a large lot of Honduras from the I.I.Green collection sold at the Harmer auction in New York on January 18th., 1980. As per Gibbons (and Minkus) the 226a green is much more scarce perforated than imperforate. I guess what I am saying is that the two reds, both perf. and imperf are very scarce; the imperforate green is somewhat less so.

AN "UNKNOWN" FANCY CANCELLATION OF GUATEMALA by "QUETZAL"

On page 48 of the handbook GI, a photograph of a cover sent to San Francisco is shown, bearing 2 x 10c and 1 x 5c of the 1871 issue. This is the earliest reported cover of this issue.

The stamps are cancelled with the large numeral "1" of Guatemala City, somewhat hidden by the quartered cork marks. No explanation has ever been seen by the writer concerning the origin of these cork strikes.

This cover has twice been put up for sale last year at two different international auctions; the first one at New York and recently at Zurich, where the following description was given:

> "1871 5c bistre-brown + 10c blue (2, one defective corner) all tied by "1" oval grid plus quartered cork cancels, on OCT. 27, 1871 cover to San Francisco, arrival cds, and blue crayon "20", fine and extremely rare, apparently the earliest first issue cover!"

(actually the d/c of Guatemala reads OCT. 10, 1871 as can be seen from the photo.)

Reverting to the cork marks, the impression is that these originate from Guatemala and indeed on page 273 of GI a similar cancel is shown and given No. CW56. However it is a fact that no fancy cancellations are found in the early issues of Guatemala; these came into use during the latter part of the seventies.

It is, therefore, logical to assume that this quartered cork strike was applied at San Francisco, Indeed, the colour of it supports this assumption as it is in the same colour as the d/c S.F. arrival cancel.

It would be interesting to hear if anyone has a different view and facts to support it.

CAUSERIE

434 Dr Derek Pocock sends some further examples of pen cancels on the early issues of Nicaragua (as illustrated by D N Kilner). John Fosbery feels that to "decode" these squiggles, (except where they are obvious rate marks) would require a great mass of this material, such as it is unlikely one can assemble nowadays. Here are Derek's offerings: